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THE SABBATARIANS OF HUNGARY.

I.

THE celebration of the Sabbath is as much a common religious institution, as one of the most obvious marks of distinction between Judaism and Christianity. On the one hand, the whole Christian world observes each seventh day as a hallowed day of rest, thus to some extent pointing from week to week in the most solemn and in the most general and public manner, to the origin of Christianity: on the other hand, it is just by means of this Sabbath celebration—by ordaining that the Sabbath should be observed on a different day from that on which the people of Israel and the founders of Christianity themselves kept it—that Christianity has set itself in conscious and intentional opposition to the first possessors and inheritors of this great institution. Thus what was a mark of uniformity became a mark of diversity, and the separate observance of the seventh day developed into the most effective cause of separation between the Christian community and the adherents of the Jewish faith.

It is well known that the Reform movement that has gone on in Judaism has aimed at removing this cause of separation, and that both in Europe, and, in recent times, in North America, efforts have been made from Jewish quarters to deprive the Christian observance of the day of rest of its separating and disjoining character, by transferring the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday. It is equally well known that these efforts have remained quite isolated, and that the followers of Judaism, almost without exception, have adhered to the old Sabbath, and deserve as before the title of "Sabbath-observers," which, according to the Mishnah [Nedarim iii. 10], belongs equally to the Jews and the Samaritans.

On the side of Christianity, efforts have likewise been made to abolish this separation of the Christian from the Jewish day of rest—a separation violent in its very nature, but hallowed by the ecclesiastical law and practice of many centuries. But while Jewish reform, in advocating the transference of the Sabbath to Sunday, was actuated above all things by the

most coldly practical considerations, the efforts within the Christian Church, which are known by the distinctive term "Sabbatarianism," had their origin in religious fanaticism. Such a fanatical sect of Sabbatarians was founded by Johanna Southcote, who died in 1814. Believing in the approaching advent of the Messiah, and as a fitting preparation for that event, this sect as late as 1831 observed the Jewish law, and especially the celebration of the Sabbath. There exists in England and North America, another sect of Sabbatarians, forming a small society among the Baptists, who keep the Jewish Sabbath side by side with the Christian Sunday.

While, however, the "Sabbath-observers" only deserve notice as a curiosity of ecclesiastical history, like many other outgrowths of the later Christianity which distinguish English sectarianism, a deeper significance attaches to two other religious societies which have sprung up in the east of Europe, and to which the name of "Sabbath-observers" has likewise been given. These bodies demand more comprehensive attention and treatment, not only because their past is rooted in a great religious movement, and because of the ethnographical and historical interest which they are calculated to arouse, but still more because they are not so well known as their namesakes of England and America, who emerged into the light of day under the conditions of western freedom and publicity. More especially still do the Sabbatarians of Eastern Europe claim the interest of contemporary Judaism, inasmuch as they offer the only instance of a religious community, insignificant though it be, spontaneously, and from profound religious motives, going over to the Jewish persuasion.

II.

As regards the *Russian* Sabbath-observers, the so-called Sobotniki or Subbotniki, we have to depend for an account of their origin and present condition, on a few extremely scanty notices. They belong to the Russian sect, Molokani or Milk-drinkers, one of the various sects that arose, during the sixteenth century, in those provinces of Southern Russia which were at that time under the supremacy of the Polish crown, all of which sects displayed a Judaizing tendency, a marked leaning towards the Mosaic law. The Molokani, so runs the account given by a Russian chronicler,¹ observed the Sabbath

¹ Quoted by Hermann Sternberg, *History of the Jews in Poland* (Leipzig, 1878), Ch. 23, from which most of the information here adduced from Russian and Polish sources is taken.

and had their children circumcised. The performance of Divine service, and the execution of other religious practices they entrusted to the oldest and most learned men selected from their own body. They deny the divinity of Christ, reject the belief in the Holy Ghost, recognise no saints, and condemn the reverence paid to images as idolatry. Their worship consists of reading the Bible and singing the Psalms. For purposes of public service they assemble in a dwelling-room, which they call "shool" (schkola). Persecuted in the government of Moscow, the Molokans settled in that of Woronesch, and subsequently spread throughout the neighbouring government of Saratow. In the second half of the eighteenth century, their number in the first-named government had grown to 5,000 souls. By keeping their doctrines secret, they escaped persecution, till they were betrayed in 1769, and made to suffer oppression from the State. They nevertheless continued to make progress in spite of the cruel measures adopted for their suppression. Indeed in the first quarter of this century, encouraged by the tolerant administration of the Czar Alexander I., they ventured to prosecute schemes of open proselytism. Count Alexander Kuschelew-Bezborodko, the owner of immense estates in the Bobrow district of the government of Woronesch, among the inhabitants of which there was an especially large proportion of Molokans, cautioned his steward, in 1826, to observe, in his treatment of the sect, the maxim that it is better to use forbearance towards the guilty than to punish one that is innocent. Nevertheless all possible means were to be taken to prevent the continued practice of the rite of circumcision. The Count just alluded to, exerted himself, to some extent with success, to convert the sectaries to the orthodox Church, while the unconverted he transferred by force to his possessions in the Crimea and in the Caucasus. However, the apostasy of those who were left in their home was only apparent. Forty years later, in the year 1869, the Governor of Woronesch reports that the Molokani had their chief centre in that government in the neighbourhood of Pritschyngol, and that they adhered to the precepts of their secret faith, whilst outwardly acting as Christians. And in 1877, the organ of the Bishop of Woronesch writes that the Subbotniki resident in that government, who had until then been good orthodox Christians, and had attended the orthodox churches, were beginning to avoid the orthodox priests, and to cease their attendance at church. They formed small congregations and adopted circumcision. "A peasant, named Ephim Botscharenkow, in the village of Ozerok, in the district of Bobrow,

officiates as their 'Rabbi.' They now call themselves 'Believers in the Bible of Moses,' reject the divinity of Christ, have given away their images, wear no crosses on their necks, and never cross themselves." According to the same source, the largest number of Subbotniki are to be found in the Palow and Bobrow districts. In the adjacent government of Don, however, conversions from the Russian Church to the Sabbatarian faith have occurred. All these Judaizers, concludes the notice, are peasants of genuine Russian descent.

While in these statements, which reach down to the most recent times, there is no mention of any open and unconditional adoption of Judaism on the part of the Russian Sabbath-keepers, though, as I learn from communications lately received from Russia, a movement in that direction is at present in process of development among the Subbotniki,¹ yet, outside the Russian frontier, namely, in the territory of European Turkey, such conversions did take place some 20 to 30 years ago. It appears that during the persecutions of the first half of this century, numerous Subbotniki wended their way westwards and settled on the Bulgarian banks of the Danube. Dr. Bares, Imperial Ottoman Physician for Quarantine, writes from Tultscha, under date 29th May, 1869 (in *Phillippsohn's Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, 28th year, p. 398): "In the vicinity of Silistria live many Sobotniki, partly scattered, partly together in considerable numbers; here in Tultscha reside several families, who were formerly Sobotniki, but who have here become Jews. In their homes they use the Russian language, and they speak Jüdisch-Deutsch very imperfectly. Most of their wives are born Jewesses (daughters of Jewish Poles), a few are born Sobotniki, who have embraced Judaism. In Russia this sect is said to be numerous, and intermarriages with orthodox Russians rarely occur. I was acquainted here with a woman from Odessa, whose two brothers, Sobotniki, have here become Jews. This woman was married to a very wealthy Russian belonging to the orthodox Christian form of faith. There also resides in Tultscha an industrious Jewish blacksmith, whose father had been a Russian priest. This smith reads and writes Russian well, and has made for his own use a collection of Hebrew words, to which he has added the Russian equivalents. He told me that he had become a convert to Judaism from the most sincere conviction solely

¹ Compare also a communication from B. Schewzik in *The Jewish Chronicle* of 5th April, 1889. In the *Jüdisches Literaturblatt* of Dr. Rahmer (1890, page 22). I found the notice that three hundred Sobotniki families live in Tiflis, capital of Georgia and Caucasus; they possess a beautiful synagogue, administered by a Rabbi named Krawcow.

through the study of the Holy Scriptures." The author of this sketch thought he noticed that almost all the Sobotniki who had embraced Judaism had characteristic Jewish features.

III.

The Hungarian Sabbatarians—Szombatosok—present, both in their origin and in the vicissitudes of their history, many analogies with the Russian Subbotniki. They, too, emerged from a great religious agitation; they, too, as regards nationality, remained strictly children of their people and of their home, and continued in their previous avocations, the chief of which was the cultivation of the soil. Here, as there, the Sabbatarians were exposed to oppressive restrictions and cruel persecutions. Preserving for centuries the secret of their faith, these martyrs for the sake of the teachings handed down to them by their fathers, silently and patiently suffered, until here and there Judaism ventured to receive them into its bosom and they formally embraced the religion of which they had so long and so steadfastly been unrecognised adherents.

Besides these points of resemblance, however, the two sects likewise show points of difference, and in these respects the balance of historical significance inclines in favour of the Hungarian Sabbatarians. The latter, like the Russian Molokani, counted their adherents chiefly among the inferior peasantry, but at the head of the sect there stood, as its founders and leaders, men of a high order and of most remarkable spiritual endowment. They were able to reckon as belonging to them several important men, whose very personalities were sufficient to arouse interest in the sect. In the religious principles of the Hungarian Sabbatarians, there may be traced without difficulty a distinct development, which brought them gradually quite close to Judaism. Finally, the Sabbatarians of Hungary have produced a literature, which, although very small in extent, yet occupies a respectable place in the national literature of Hungary, especially as regards its poetical portion, and which, as we shall immediately proceed to show, possesses a special interest of its own in its relation to the history of Jewish literature.

After what has been said, it will be readily acknowledged that the deepest gratitude should be felt that a Jewish author, eminent for his conscientious research, should have undertaken the task of making the Hungarian Sabbatarians, their history, their doctrines, and their literature, a subject for full historical exposition. Dr. Samuel Kohn, Rabbi of Buda-Pesth, who has

gained a wide reputation for solid scholarship, through his profound works on the literature of the oldest sect which Judaism has produced, viz., the Samaritans, and who some years ago issued the first volume of a *History of the Jews in Hungary* (in the Hungarian language), showing evidences of most extensive investigation into original sources, has published in the Hungarian journal, *Magyar-Zsidó-Szemle* (*Hungarian-Jewish Review*), and subsequently, as a separate work in an expanded form, a monograph on the Sabbatarians,¹ which contains numerous fresh information concerning the history and literature of this sect. In this work many previous views and statements on the subject receive considerable correction, and, for the first time, an exact and exhaustive knowledge of Sabbatarianism and its history is rendered possible, by means of a comprehensive historical treatment of the question, for the purposes of which all available sources of information have been carefully consulted. While the sect as such has ceased to exist, since its meagre remnant now only prolongs the existence of an insignificant and world-forgotten Jewish community, it emerges again through Kohn's labours, to renewed life in history, arousing the sympathy and interest of all who feel a prompting to observe the rise and activity, the struggles and sufferings of a religious community that sprang into existence and marked out its course under most extraordinary conditions—especially the interest and sympathy of the whole united Jewish brotherhood, to which this small sect belonged in spirit, even before it was incorporated therewith outwardly. In the conviction that the Hungarian Sabbatarians deserve to be known not only within the boundaries of their native country, but everywhere where Jewish science numbers adherents and friends, I have attempted in the following to give, by the aid of Kohn's complete treatise, a short sketch of their origin, their history, and their literature, with the object of enabling those to whom it is not permitted to inform themselves on the subject by directly consulting a work written in Hungarian, to include within the range of their interest and historical knowledge, a sect which, outside Hungary, has hitherto aroused so small an amount of attention.

¹ The title in Hungarian is as follows: A Szombatosok Torténetük, Dogmatikájuk és irodalmuk. Különös tekintettel Péchi Simon főkanzellár életére és munkáira. (The Sabbatarians: their history, theology, and literature, with special allusion to the life and works of the High Chancellor, Simon Péchi). Buda Pesth, 1890 (pp. xvi. 377, 8vo.)

IV.

The home of the Sabbatarians is Transylvania (in Hungarian Endély, in German Siebenbürgen), a portion of Hungary which for the past twenty years has been by statute entirely united to the other portions of the kingdom, but which, previous to that time, maintained for centuries a separate existence, and had been the scene of the most varied historical vicissitudes. Just as Transylvania from an ethnographical point of view is one of the most remarkable countries, harbouring as it does within its narrow frontiers three nationalities differing so materially from each other as the Hungarians (among whom the Székelys make a still further sub-division), the Germans (Saxons) and the Roumanians: so also in the recent history of religion is its position a remarkable one. The boundaries of Transylvania marked the extreme geographical limits to which the Reformation spread in the east of Europe; but within the boundaries of this small country the religious revival of the 16th century passed, in rapid and surely progressive development, through the various stages from Catholicism to extreme Unitarianism. Furthermore, thanks to favourable historical conditions, freedom was conceded to the followers of every creed to practise their religion, so that in the year 1568, under the sway of Prince Johann Siegmund, four religions were placed on an equal footing by law or recognised as "*religiones receptæ*": the Catholic, the Lutheran, the Reformed, and the Unitarian. The history of the beginnings of Unitarianism in Transylvania attaches itself to the name Francis David. The reformation found this man a Catholic priest; in 1540, together with the whole of the citizens of Kolosvár (Klausenburg), he professed his adherence to Luther's faith; in 1559, however, he went over to the Reformed Church, and maintained their dogmas with the same zeal as he had hitherto defended those of the Lutherans. As court chaplain to Prince Johann Siegmund, who had likewise become a Calvinist, F. David became acquainted with Biandrata, one of the founders of Unitarianism in Poland, who, since 1563, had acted as physician to the court of the princes of Transylvania. This functionary soon converted the court preacher to his own religious views. As early as 1566, F. David founded the Unitarian Church of Transylvania. The new church at first ventured to propagate its anti-Trinitarian doctrines openly, and to expound them in various fugitive writings and disputations. This liberty, however, it did not enjoy long, for already, in the year 1570, that zealous Catholic

Stephen Bathori, subsequently King of Poland, became the successor to Johann Siegmund, who had in the meantime gone over to the Unitarian form of faith, and both he and his successor in the princely dignity, Christopher Bathori, endeavoured to check the growth of Unitarianism by stringent measures. They aimed their attack especially against F. David, whose restless energy led him to ever more daring deductions, and who had been branded as an unscrupulous innovator by a section of his own co-religionists. He clung immoveably, however, to his opinions, and was in consequence condemned in 1578, to life-long imprisonment in the castle of Déva, where he died in the following year.

After David's conviction, a large section of the Unitarian clergy signed at Biandrata's instigation a declaration of faith, in which the teachings of David were repudiated. A small section, however, remained faithful to them, and even before the death of their teacher, but more especially after that event, a religious brotherhood was formed with his articles of faith for their creed. Rejecting the new Unitarian confession of Biandrata and his associates, they clung to the doctrines of Francis David, who was now revered as a martyr. It was among these followers of David—to whom their opponents gave the nickname Davidists, and of whom it was said, as it likewise was of their master (though falsely) that they "Judaized"—that a sect arose, which, going far beyond David and his adherents, not only like them rejected the specifically Christian dogmas concerning the divinity and the worship of Christ, but made distinct advances towards Judaism, and held the doctrine that the teachings and laws of the Old Testament were still binding. This was the sect of Sabbatarians; according to a trustworthy tradition, coming down to us from a contemporary chronicler, the founder of the sect was one Andreas Eössi, and the same authority names the year 1588 as the year of his initiating the movement.

V.

Andreas Eössi of Szent-Erzsébet was a rich Székely of noble birth, who owned three villages and a great number of estates in the counties of Udvarhelyszék, Küküllő, and Fehérvár, and who belonged to the earliest adherents of Unitarianism in Transylvania. Having been visited by severe trials, (he was ailing for many years, and had lost his wife and three sons), he sought consolation in religion. "He read the Bible so long"—runs the account of the chronicler already mentioned—"that he evolved therefrom the Sabbatarian form of religion." What

he recognised as truth, he endeavoured to disseminate in the surrounding district; he composed treatises, prayers, and hymns, caused copies of these and other writings to be prepared, and lent them out in all directions. He possessed no knowledge of Hebrew, and had only a slender acquaintance with the Classics. He was, however, well versed in Church history, and was completely master of the Old and New Testament, from both of which he derived his teaching. He was altogether an enemy of the scholastic theology, and said on one occasion: "They ask me in vain where I discovered the true way of salvation, since I sojourned neither at Padua nor at Paris. As if salvation consisted of knowing many heathen writings and many heathen languages." He betook himself with his new propaganda to "the great simple community," as the chronicler says. Soon, too, he had fellow-workers, whose names have only partially been preserved, and the most distinguished of whom, Simon Péchi, will be the subject of more particular mention below. About 1600, there was compiled "the old hymn-book of the Sabbatarians," probably by Eössi himself. This book is the most important source whence a knowledge of the doctrines of the sect may be derived; it is the oldest monument of their literature, and contains paraphrases of the Psalms and other poetical passages of the Bible, metrical renderings of a few extracts from the Jewish prayer-book, older Unitarian hymns either unaltered or adapted to the new religious views, numerous original hymns and festive songs, and lastly, a collection of didactic poems. Of the 110 poetical compositions which are to be found in three manuscripts of this old Sabbatarian hymn-book, no less than 44 relate to the Sabbath, which, on account of the special regard in which its celebration was held, gave the sect the name they bear. Five songs belong to the New Moon, 11 to the Festival of Passover, 6 to the Feast of Weeks, 6 to Tabernacles, 3 to the New Year and 1 to the Day of Atonement. Besides these, there are 3 funeral hymns, 26 hymns of varied contents, and 5 didactic poems.

The foregoing summary shows what position the Jewish festivals occupied in the ritual of the Sabbatarians. They kept, of course, only the festivals enjoined in the Pentateuch, for the Sabbatarians of the first period only recognised the Five Books of Moses as the religious law to which they were pledged. They did not celebrate Purim and Chanukah. But even the Mosaic Laws they did not observe in their entirety, for they kept the dietary laws only up to a certain limit, and circumcision not at all. The Sabbath played the most important part in their religious life, probably for this reason: that

it brought the contrast between them and Christianity most prominently into view. They called the Sabbath celebration a "spiritual marriage," and adorned themselves for it in wedding attire. The Sabbath service consisted of prayers and hymns, introduced and concluded by the sermon or "instruction." One of the Sabbatical hymns mentions among the requisites of a proper observance of the Sabbath, "study of the holy law, feeding the poor, moderation in living, cheerfulness of disposition"; in another it is said: "Let man first hallow himself, then the Sabbath of the Lord." Although the feast of the first of Tishri is not designated the New Year festival in the Pentateuch, yet they celebrated it as the "New Year" with special emphasis, as a contrast to the "papal invention of the Christian new year." In attempting to understand this celebration of the Jewish festivals by the older Sabbatarians, it must be remarked as particularly characteristic, that they maintained that, in adhering to these observances, they were following the example and teaching of Jesus. "He who keeps not the Sabbath will have no portion in the inheritance of Christ"; they celebrated "the Passover of Israel, according to the command of our Christ." They bound up with the Passover festival (in accordance with the views which they entertained regarding the millennium) the hope of the future redemption which Jesus will bring, in order to build up his millennial kingdom.

In other respects, also, it is impossible to overlook the Jewish-Christian character of Sabbatarianism. They regard Jesus as greater than Moses and the prophets; call him "our Christ," "Lord Jesus," "King," even "the son of God"; the last, however, in the sense that all deserve to be called "sons of God" who are free from sin. For the most part they reverence him as the Messiah, as the Deliverer proclaimed by the prophets. On the other hand, however, they accentuated his purely human nature, and laid stress on the belief that his mission had for its object not the destruction but the maintenance of the Law. The Apostles in their teaching turned away from the Old Testament, only because "desiring as much as possible to spare heathens, who were weak and quite unused to the Law, they did not wish to force everything upon them at once." Jesus himself, however, "was a Jew both in nationality and religion; he preached the Jewish law and drew men to Moses and the prophets. His Apostles too were all Jews, taught the Jewish faith and kept it themselves." Whoever, therefore, would be a true follower of Jesus and the Apostles must obey the Mosaic Law in all things, as the Jews have always done and still do.

The one thing for which the Sabbatarians reproached the Jews, was that they refused to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. In spite of this, however, the Jews are still God's chosen people even in their dispersion. "There is no man, no people, no nationality under heaven whom God has chosen like the Jews." The Sabbatarians frequently declared that they joined themselves to Israel, and felt themselves Jews. In a Sabbath hymn occurs the following: "We have chosen the observance of Thy law, we have found delight in the camp of Israel, despite his miserable lot." And in another song: "Not Abraham was our father, neither are we the remnant of his seed; but we are sprung from the house of Japheth, sons of ignorant heathens . . . Yet in Thee, our gracious Father, delight and exult our heart, our soul, and our mouth; though we were heathens, yet hast Thou turned unto us and hast made us sons of great Abraham." In one hymn they express their thanks for their conversion to the Law: "Thou hast brought us forth from this worldly blindness, hast delivered us from the hell of errors, from danger, sin, death, from the torment of fiery hell."

Another way in which the Sabbatarians demonstrated their accession to Judaism was by their strict exclusion of Christian ceremonies. They were most determined in their repudiation of baptism, especially infant baptism, which had been already discarded by F. David, but which the Unitarian Church had re-introduced. They declared the Christian festivals to be inventions of the popes, and even protested against the ringing of church bells. They regarded the Lord's Supper, not as a new institution of Jesus, but as an old Jewish custom. On the first night of Passover they ate unleavened bread, "the bread of the Messiah," calling to mind the Redeemer, who had appeared, and would one day come again. The ethics underlying the old hymn-book of the Sabbatarians reflect the principles of Jewish moral teaching, and of such Christian moral teaching as is closely connected with the Jewish. They paraphrased the command to love one's fellow-men thus: "What is pleasing to thee, that must thou practise towards others," and further, "What I do not wish for myself from others, that I am not bound by in the case of others." On the other hand, concerning the New Testament behest to love one's enemies, we find the following: "Anything impossible which transcends the law, God requires of no one." A hymn contains the exhortation "to pray with pure earnest heart for those who persecute us." Practical humanity and benevolence are commended and glorified in a host of varied sayings. One who might have done good and omitted to do it commits a heinous

sin. On festivals we ought "to rejoice and to give joy to others, to let the poor share in all good." Debauchery and excessive drinking are condemned as capital crimes. Fulfilment of civil duties, respect for authority and for the laws of the country, are enjoined in the name of religion. Yet the limitation expressed in the following strophe is characteristic of the position of the Sabbatarians as a sect who were harassed in the practice of their faith: "Let us fear and honour our princes, let us honour the judges and their names, let us submit to their word according to God's will, but in no wise honour them against God's will."

VI.

The legal enactments, which were designed to crush and prevent the further spread of Sabbatarianism as disseminated by F. David's teachings and confirmed by Andreas Eössi, did not achieve this result. In the year 1595 the Diet of Fehérvár (Karlsburg) passed a law for the suppression of the Sabbatarians; the voyvode Michael, who usurped the princely dignity of Transylvania, ordered their punishment and the confiscation of their possessions in 1600; Sigmund Rakóczy, made a similar regulation in the year 1607. Three years later a Diet, held in Bistritz under Gabriel Báthory, passed a law concerning the punishment of those "numerous persons in the country who follow Jewish beliefs and Jewish rites, and utter blasphemies against God." And in the year 1618—the same year which ushered in the Thirty Years' Religious War—Prince Gabriel Bethlen found himself necessitated to lay before the deputies assembled in Klausenburg a law "against the Sabbatarians or Judaizers." These severe laws and regulations, so often repeated, did not, indeed, remain a dead letter. In the year 1600 the books and writings of the Sabbatarians were confiscated and burnt at Maros-Vásárhely; new persecutions were continually being devised against their property, their liberty and their lives. In the hymn-book the lamentations of the oppressed and tormented sufferers for their faith's sake find frequent vent. In one hymn we find them wailing thus: "What means it that they afflict us thus in the cause of truth? . . . For the sake of our creed we are obliged to forsake father and mother, our sweet home, wife and child, house and heritage, and all on which life hangs. Much misery must we endure, wandering from place to place; much disgrace must we suffer." Yet the fact that in so short a period the laws against the Sabbatarians had to be enacted afresh testifies to their defectiveness as well as to the failure which

attended their execution. It was just at this time that Transylvania passed through one of the most chequered and turbulent periods of its history, and the internal disorders and foreign wars diverted attention from the sectaries. On the other hand, persecution had only the effect of confirming them still more in their religious zeal, and they looked down with pity upon their opponents in faith who oppressed and abused them. The passionate hope that ultimate victory would crown their down-trodden faith, aroused in the Sabbatarians of Maros-Vásárhely the assurance that the Mohammedan Turks were appointed to the task of establishing the true faith in their country. They despatched a letter to Pasha Sinan, who was engaged in war with Prince Sigmund Báthory, in which they declared that they, "who likewise eat no swine's flesh and acknowledge God's unity, have arrived at the conclusion that things cannot longer continue thus, and that the One God will deliver the power into the hands of the mighty Emperor of Turkey and his people." The letter was intercepted, and its senders were punished or were compelled to flee. The Sabbatarians increased, as one of their hymns phrases it, "from day to day." Their creed found an increasing number of adherents among the Székelys, and exclusively among them. For the most part these converts came from the Unitarian Church, but some joined direct from the Reformed community. In Maros-Vásárhely, for instance, almost the whole Reformed body became Sabbatarians. Sabbatarianism naturally gained most of its followers in the neighbourhood of the residence of its founder, Eössi. It established itself chiefly in a number of villages—tradition counts thirty-two of them—but also in towns, such as Maros-Vásárhely, Klausenburg, Torda, Köröspatak, Székely-Keresztúr, and even outside Transylvania—as, for instance, in Makó. Besides agriculturists and artisans, many of the inferior and superior nobility belonged to the Sabbatarian body. Among them, too, were some who occupied exalted offices of State. The Prince Stefan Bocskai, in his will written in the year 1606, appointed three executors, two of whom—Court-preacher Alvinczi and Simon Péchi, then Secretary of State—were Sabbatarians. Of the four deputies representing Gabriel Bethlen, who, in his name, drew up the treaty concluded with the Emperor Matthias II. at Tyrnau in 1615, three were ardent Sabbatarians, viz., Thomas Boros (who had signed the letter to the Pasha Sinan, heading the list with his name); Simon Péchi, at that time already Chief Chancellor of the country; and Francis Balássy, senior, whom the popular tradition of the Székelys names as the founder of the sect.

Notwithstanding their rapid growth, the Sabbatarians of

this epoch formed no congregations, nor had they any recognised clergy. Generally—as was later also the case—the more zealous and well-informed members of the sect discharged the functions of precentor and preacher. In the year 1606 they held their first Synod at Udvarhely, for the purpose of settling common religious rites and forms. As the Synod had been interdicted by Sigmund Rakóczy, the Regent of Transylvania, in the name of Bocskai, the meetings were held in secret. At one of these gatherings the calendar was so adapted as to secure the simultaneous celebration of New Moon and Festivals. To understand this act, it must be remembered that no Jews dwelt in the whole country of the Székelys, and that a Jewish Calendar belonged so literally to the class of rarities, that in 1620 Péchi caused one to be bought in Constantinople for two ducats.

The open breach between the Sabbatarians and Unitarianism, as adherents of which the former still thought they had the right to regard themselves, took place in 1618, when a Synod of Unitarians at Erdő-Sz. György formally excommunicated the heretics from the Unitarian Church. At the same moment, however, the Reformed Bishop, to whom Gabriel Bethlen had granted full power to execute the laws directed against the Sabbatarians, entrusted the clergy of his own church with the task of re-converting them to the Christian faith.

VII.

The man who was to bring Sabbatarianism in Transylvania to its prime—who was to develop its full power and make it approach nearer and nearer to Judaism—was the individual already several times referred to, Simon Péchi; an historical figure of the highest interest, as much on account of his personal changes of fortune as for his public acts as a statesman, to say nothing of his secret activity in the character of of guide and honoured head of the sect founded by Andreas Eössi. As regards his life, which legend has illumined with its lustre, his great grandson Baron Alexius Orbán, left behind him in his will (1740) a few particulars resting upon trustworthy family tradition. Born in Hungary before 1570, Simon Péchi came in early youth to Transylvania. After finishing his studies he became a schoolmaster at the Unitarian School in Szent-Erzsébet, the residence of Andreas Eössi. The latter engaged him as tutor to his children, and at the same time entrusted him with the management of his property. Eössi exerted himself to secure for the highly-

gifted and learned youth a brilliant future, his object being to be able to place in the young man's hands the destiny and doctrines of his sect. He sent him upon journeys, provided with letters of introduction from the Prince. Péchi spent a considerable time in Constantinople, North Africa, Rome, Naples, Spain, Portugal and France. Having increased his already considerable knowledge of Oriental and European languages, he returned to Transylvania in 1599 after an absence of several years, and found that meanwhile Eössi had adopted him as his son, and had appointed him his sole heir. Soon afterwards Eössi died, and Péchi, now as rich as he was learned and shrewd, began a brilliant public career under the various reigning princes who followed each other in rapid succession. In 1608 he married Judith Kornis, becoming thereby related to the most prominent families of the country. Under Gabriel Bethlen he filled the highest public office, for eight years holding the appointment of Chancellor of Transylvania. In this capacity, he was entrusted by the Prince with the most important missions and affairs of State, and rose higher and higher in respect, influence and wealth, so that it was generally thought that he was at that time the greatest man of the Principality. After the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, Péchi also took part in Bethlen's campaigns and conducted the negotiations with the Emperor Ferdinand II. For reasons not clearly explained, this brilliant career, so full of excellent service, was suddenly and violently interrupted. By command of Bethlen he was deprived of his liberty, and for three and a-half years was kept in strict custody at Szamos-ujvár. This event formed a turning-point, pregnant with results affecting not only the life of Péchi, but the development of Sabbatarianism.

Up to this time Péchi had passed before the public eye as a Unitarian and a very good Christian, but his connection with Eössi proves sufficiently that in secret he had long been a Sabbatarian. There are, besides, more direct proofs of this. The most important of these is the fact that the old hymn-book of the Sabbatarians contains two long festival hymns, composed by him long before his downfall; one for the new moon, a free adaptation of a well-known Hebrew prayer, the other for the feast of Passover. During his long imprisonment, he spent his days, as he himself says in his letters, which abound in Biblical reminiscences, "in weeping, prayer, and perusing writings." By the latter term are to be understood the Biblical writings, especially those of the Old Testament. When he again obtained his freedom, he lived in complete retirement until the death of Bethlen which happened in 1529,

devoting his time and abilities to Sabbatarianism—though at first cautiously and in secret. Shortly after his imprisonment, and perhaps even owing to his initiative, the influx of Sephardic Jews from Turkey into Transylvania took place. Bethlen granted them full freedom as regards their worship, and likewise the right of omitting all distinction of dress from Christians. Contact with these followers of Judaism, who neither in respect of appearance nor culture afforded any reason for derision or contempt, and who for the most part occupied respected positions, must have exerted a stimulating influence upon the Jewish aspirations and religious views of those Sabbatarians who were tending towards Judaism. Péchi in particular had now the advantage of putting himself without trouble in possession of works of Jewish literature, and with their help he developed during his retirement a rich literary activity. Among his collection of books were to be found—as may be inferred from his writings—editions and translations of the Bible and of the Talmud and its commentaries, of the more distinguished Jewish exegetists of the Middle Ages, and various works treating of the Jewish ritual and Jewish ethics. Those of his writings which were written for the purpose of propagating Sabbatarianism, he strove to disseminate by means of manuscript copies, since he dared not publish them.

VIII.

It was only after the death of Bethlen that the ex-chancellor, who, in spite of the loss of his public honours and the larger portion of his estates, was still greatly respected, emerged from his cautious reserve. While on the one hand he endeavoured to recover his possessions, which had been taken from him without legal sentence, on the other he boldly manifested his adherence to the Sabbatarian faith. He held open intercourse with the Jews who had settled in Klausenburg, arranged his household in Szent-Erzsébet entirely after the Jewish manner, and kept the Sabbath, together with all his domestics, although he would not allow his dependents to work on Sunday either. He likewise observed the other Jewish ordinances, and constrained his family to practise them. He organised a synagogue in his place of residence, where service was held every Sabbath, and a portion read from the Torah. In other districts, also, the Sabbatarians held public service, and for this purpose claimed the use of the Unitarian churches. This, for instance, was the case in the village Bözöd-Ujfalú, which, indeed, was under Péchi's

“patronage,” and in which the Sabbatarians have maintained their position for the longest period. At the same time Péchi continued his literary activity, and, in particular, wrote his main work, viz., his compendium of prayers and ritual compositions, derived from various Jewish sources, by means of which he introduced Jewish prayers, and made his followers acquainted with the less important customs of the Jewish religion also. With this work the religious practice of the Sabbatarians, which hitherto had been undefined and uncertain, received a specific foundation, which, however, had its roots entirely in Judaism. The Sabbatarians were by Péchi, to a certain extent, brought near to Judaism.

With this firmer consolidation of the Sabbatarian faith in the period following Bethlen's death, its spread among the adherents of the various sects in Transylvania went hand in hand. The political circumstances of the country, in part also the authority of Péchi, brought about the result that the severe laws against the sects—one was issued by the Diet of 1635—remained inoperative, and Sabbatarianism stood about this time at the height of the development of its powers.

IX.

Yet the storm was already gathering which brought catastrophe upon Péchi and his followers. Prince George Rákóczy I., after having emerged triumphantly from the struggle with Johann Bethlen and the Turks allied with him, put the laws against the Sabbatarians into execution with great zeal, and with the determined resolve to make the Judaizing schismatics feel this time the full rigour of the law. On the 1st of July (1638), a commission, consisting of members of the four recognised religions, met at Deés, and, having constituted itself into a judicial court—the proceedings of which, being well prepared beforehand, were brief and rapid—sentenced to loss of life and goods the Sabbatarians who had been summoned to appear and who were convicted of Judaism, as well as all who by a certain date, fixed beforehand, would not have declared their adherence to one of the four recognised religions. The majority of the sentences were only executed as regards that portion which decreed the confiscation of property, whether fixed or movable. Only in one single case was the death sentence fulfilled: in the case of all the other condemned persons it was commuted into confinement within a stronghold. Many hundreds—so relates a contemporary—were conveyed to the various castles at Várad,

Székelyhid, Jenő, Déva, Fogaras, Szamos-ujvár, Kövár, and "chains enough could not be forged for them."

Péchi himself had not gone to Déva, owing to illness. An examination of witnesses was, therefore, held in the town where he resided, and as a result judgment was pronounced upon him, which decreed the loss of his life and property. At Kövár the hoary and ailing old man suffered a second time the pangs of imprisonment. However, bail having been furnished by the foremost deputies of the principality, he was allowed to go free. He had to take an oath to renounce Sabbatarianism, and not to pass the frontiers of Transylvania without permission. He lived on for several years, outwardly attached to the Reformed faith, for the most part occupying himself with the management of the small portion of his estate left in his possession, and died in 1642, or 1643, at the age of more than seventy-five years. His burial-place cannot be discovered. The traditional story of the Sabbatarians runs to the effect that Péchi fled with a number of his followers to Moldavia, and afterwards to Constantinople, where he became director of the Government printing department.

After the death of George Rákóczy, the prosecution of the Sabbatarians was continued by his successors. But the strength of the sect was broken by the vigorous measures adopted at Deés. The members of rich and respected families who had belonged to it preferred to be restored to the quiet possession of their estates by returning to one of the recognised religions, chiefly the Reformed. Eössi and Péchi's work, the creed and religious practice of the Sabbatarianism, returned to the obscurity in which it had been fostered and perfected. In the neighbourhood of the residence of its two founders, among the country folk belonging to a few districts of the country of the Székelys, many secretly held fast to a faith rendered still dearer to them by the martyrdom which the best of them had suffered.

X.

A new period of persecution against the remnant of the Sabbatarians begins with the year 1717, when Transylvania came under Austrian domination. Many of these poor oppressed people, punished by the confiscation of their possessions, emigrated to Turkey, while others—especially in the village of Bözöd-Ujfalú—obeying compulsion, became Catholics, at the same time, however, clinging fast to Sabbatarianism

in secret, in spite of all prohibitions and all the measures adopted for keeping them in check. In the course of time many even of these pseudo-Catholics took refuge by means of emigration from the coercion practised against them. During the closing three decades of the last century, there existed at Adrianople a whole colony of Sabbatarians, who had gone over to Judaism, as we learn from a letter written by one of their number, named Joseph Kovács, in 1778. Among other things, he writes to his parents as follows :—" We Hungarians are here all together, we are called Ger Sido (Jewish proselytes) I received the name of Joseph ben Abraham, and so the priests call me up to the reading of the Holy Law. Every one pays me respect here, even the chief priests. My work, too, is not injurious to my body. . . . I am a book-binder, and live well, for the bread is beautifully white, just like linen, and I drink the best red wine to my heart's content." To his brothers he writes: "I beg of you not to trouble our dear father and mother; but if you would come hither do not leave our parents behind." Then he interlards his letter with a quotation from the hymn-book: "I pray to God that he may bring us together even in this life in the land of Israel, that he may send us salvation speedily in our days and gather his sons to Jerusalem; where we, together with our king the holy Messiah, shall dwell in our own land, where, united with the chosen, we shall win a crown with those who are crowned; where we shall settle with our father Abraham." It is curious to observe, how in this simple son of the Székely country, love for his own in the distant home is joined with the satisfaction of having found the means of a comfortable living in the new home; how he dwells with pride on his new Jewish name, and on the respect which he enjoys among the heads of the Synagogue; and how in the quotation from the old hymn-book of his forefathers, he gives expression to the Messianic hope, which from the very beginning had been a living aspiration with the Sabbatarians, and, indeed, formed a fundamental dogma of their faith.

The famous Edict of Tolerance, published by the Emperor Joseph II. (1781), which improved in a liberal spirit the relations of the recognised religions only, made the condition of the Sabbatarians still worse. New adverse judgments were pronounced and further emigration took place. During the first three decades of our century a considerable portion of the Catholic Sabbatarians, in order to escape the annoyance to which they were subjected from the spiritual authorities, went over to the Reformed religion—of course again only outwardly. But while outwardly they professed Christianity,

their connection with Judaism had become closer and closer. The Sabbatarians observed with the greatest strictness not only the Sabbath, but likewise the Jewish dietary laws, and by every possible device they evaded the practice of Christian religious customs. Although after Péchi there was no kind of literary productiveness among them, yet they preserved and copied the old hymn-books of their sect, and especially the writings of Péchi, his prayer-book and book of rites, works resting entirely upon Jewish sources. In the first half of this century the influence of the strictly orthodox Jews residing in their neighbourhood also made itself felt. The Sabbatarians had become Jews before they openly embraced Judaism. A Christian observer, in a description written in the year 1855, mentions, among other things, the following particulars concerning the Sabbatarians of Bözöd-Ujfalú:—"The thirty-eight Sabbatarian families (about 150 souls) outwardly belong for the most part to the Reformed Faith, several, however, are Unitarians, only very few Greek-Catholics. On Sunday they visit the respective churches and listen with wrapt attention whenever the clergymen cite quotations or narrative incidents from the Old Testament. On Christian festivals they keep away from church. On the Sabbath they hold Divine service at home; but on the rest of their Jewish celebrations they meet in the house of a member which is devoted to the purposes of a Synagogue, on which occasions Sabbatarians living elsewhere, especially those of Nagy-Ernye, attend. The service is conducted by one of the members, who is chosen Rabbi, whom, however, they frequently change for another. Much superstition is mixed up with their belief. They can all read and write. They preserve their traditions faithfully, and boys of eight to ten years old can be heard talking about the history, adorned with legend, of Sabbatarianism and of Simon Péchi. Notwithstanding their communicativeness they are very reserved as regards the books of their sect. They give their children for the most part Old Testament names, especially the name Moses. At marriages and burials they perform Jewish customs, before the Christian ones demanded by established religion take place. After marriage in church the Jewish marriage is solemnised. The women have their hair cut off. A Sabbatarian girl never marries a Christian. Christian girls who would enter into matrimony with Sabbatarians must first pass a year of probation."—In the same year (1855), one of the most distinguished ecclesiastical princes of our time endeavoured by his eloquence to convert the Sabbatarians to Catholicism. Ludwig Haynald (at present Cardinal and Archbishop of Kalocsa), at that time

Bishop of Transylvania, betook himself for that purpose to Bözöd-Ujfalu, without, however, obtaining the least result.

In the year 1867 a Unitarian author wrote a historical sketch of the Sabbatarians, and finished by saying that it was an open secret that there were still Sabbatarians in existence in several villages of the Székely country. This fact was soon destined to be a secret no longer. The restoration of the Hungarian constitution in the year just named, and the emancipation of the Jews which followed closely upon that event (22nd December, 1867), resulted in a resolve on the part of the Sabbatarians of Bözöd-Ujfalu and Nagy-Ernye, where, likewise, a few Sabbatarians lived, to openly embrace Judaism. Two old men, Paul Stefan Kovács and Moses Kovács underwent circumcision, and, having received the sign of the covenant, became Jews. Nearly all the remaining members of the sect followed their example. The matter naturally made a great stir, the more so because the Sabbatarians, by going over to Judaism, had acted against the constitutional law of Hungary, which to-day does not even permit conversion from any Christian form of religion to Judaism. The Supreme Court of Transylvania pointed out, in a statement addressed to the Government, that neither was the law prohibiting Sabbatarianism repealed, nor was conversion to Judaism permitted. That noble and liberal-minded Minister of Public Worship and Education, Baron Joseph Eötvös, made answer that in religious questions the application of force from without was as much opposed to the interests of religion as to those of the State. The Sabbatarians thus served to clear up the fact that conversion to Judaism is not allowed by law, but that no coercive measures whatever may be employed to bring back to Christianity those who have become Jews. In pursuance of this decree, dated 12th May, 1869, the proselytes of Bözöd-Ujfalu were able to avow, publicly and without molestation, the faith which they had secretly practised for more than two hundred years. The registers of the newly-formed little Jewish congregation record the first birth on 8th January, 1868, the first marriage on 15th January, 1869, and the first death on 24th January, 1869. A Jewish author (Adolf Dux) who visited them in the year 1875, describes the Jewish Székelys of Bözöd-Ujfalu in the following terms:—"The men went barefooted, and had 'harisnyas' on—narrow trousers made of the coarse woollen stuff which is spun and woven in the houses of the Székelys. As they wore neither vests nor jackets, the ceremonial garment, which is known by the name of 'Ten Commandments'—*i.e.*, the *Arba Kanfoth*—was visible above their shirts. I was especially struck by a

young fellow with a brown, almost beardless, face; below his felt cap there waved down upon both his temples the ringlets of hair which, among Polish Jews, are called 'Peies,' and although not so artistically twisted as those of the latter, yet they were sufficiently developed to transform, by a single touch, the physiognomy of a Székely into a Jewish one. Allied with this external characteristic was a peculiar expression in the face which I should like to describe as the Jewish revelation of race as expressed by the eyes. At this I called to mind Disraeli, who asserts in one of his novels that the Jewish-Christian idea lends a Semitic character to the physiognomy of all the nations which have accepted Christianity. These Székelys, who have acted up to Judaism for two hundred years partially, and now for several years wholly, have gradually received an impress in their expression of countenance which, if not completely, yet, to a great extent, stamps them as Jews." (Compare with this a similar observation by a doctor as regards the Russian Sabbatarians who adopted Judaism, which has been quoted above.)

Ten years later (1885), during a summer sojourn in Transylvania, Dr. Moritz Beck, Rabbi of Bucharest, visited the proselytes of Bözöd-Ujfalú. He found the congregation in a despondent state. Of the thirty-nine families of which it is composed, thirty-three are of Sabbatarian, and five of Jewish origin. Two families had in the previous year returned to Christianity, an ominous sign of the decay of the long cherished fidelity to the inherited faith. The children of the school-going age partook of no instruction, for the congregation was so impoverished that it could not pay the teacher whom it had formerly had. Their Shochet—a man unsatisfactory in every respect—had not the ability to teach. The Synagogue, which had been built fifteen years before, and the communal bath threatened to fall into decay. The little congregation saw the fundamental conditions of its continuance menaced by the worst enemies—its own poverty, and indifference to the religion which it had joined with so much confidence and zeal. This gloomy narrative of the warm-hearted Rabbi of Bucharest should be the means of effecting a better state of things. The Hungarian-Jewish review (*Magyar-Zsidó Szemle*),¹ in which the account appeared, at once set on foot a fund for the maintenance of the latest and yet already old branch on the tree of Hungarian Judaism. The result of this appeal, though not brilliant,

¹ This journal appeared seven years ago under the editorship of the writer of this article and Dr. Joseph Bánóczy.

was yet in so far satisfactory that the work of help could be begun, whereby the congregation of the erstwhile Sabbatarians could be supported in the maintenance of their institutions. Worthy co-religionists residing in the neighbourhood of Bözöd-Ujfalu assist the proselyte community with valuable advice and practical help, so that when the first difficulties are surmounted they may pursue an existence worthy of their past, and become a religious society loyal to their faith and practising the teachings of Judaism. A number of years, however, must elapse, during which the work of rescue thus begun must be continued. This, in the first instance, is undoubtedly the duty of the Hungarian Jews; yet to contribute towards such an object may well be the aim of others outside Hungary, to whom the cause and honour of Judaism are dear, and who would fain prevent the inglorious martyrdom of penury befalling these descendants of martyrs of the Jewish faith.

XI.

While the descendants of the followers of Eössi and Péchi have emerged from the concealment in which they kept themselves as a secret sect for two hundred years, the literature of the Sabbatarians is still hidden in the obscurity of a number of manuscripts, which have been preserved to the present day. With the exception of a few religious hymns, no portion of this, in many respects, remarkable literature has been made generally accessible through the printing-press. To the historian of the Sabbatarians belongs the great merit that he has cleared up, not only the history of the sect, but also that of their literature, and has made it possible, for the first time, to obtain a clear idea of its contents and compass. With what difficulties he had to contend may be judged from the single circumstance that in regard to a particularly important manuscript he had to depend on extracts only. The use of the manuscript itself was denied him through the religious narrowness and scruples of its then possessors, the heads of a Unitarian educational institution. On the other hand, there stood at his command a considerable mass of material in the form of manuscript, at which he worked with critical circumspection, examining its contents with the utmost minuteness; and with the help of this he has furnished an account of the literary productions of the Sabbatarians, which is remarkably rich in new information. Only those portions of the description which are of greatest importance and command general

interest, are here brought to the knowledge of the readers of this review.

The fact that the productions of the Sabbatarian literature—poetical as well as prose—which belong to the end of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries, remained from the beginning locked up in the narrow sphere of a sect, and that the benefits of the art of printing were denied them, explains satisfactorily why the historians of the Hungarian national literature, which at that precise period had received an upward impulse in all fields of thought, took such little notice, or no notice at all, of these productions. And yet even from the point of view of literary history, they occupy, both on account of the character of their language and their intrinsic merits, a prominent position, and, in fact, the religious songs of the Sabbatarians are already beginning to be thought the most distinguished products of the Hungarian religious poetry of that epoch. Yet it is not this point of view that can here be considered as of chief importance in the consideration of this remarkable literature. What interests us here is rather its relation to Judaism and its literature. It will be easy to gather, even from a short review, such as is offered in the following, how much of significant, one might almost say unique, interest is yielded by these intellectual productions of an insignificant sect.

As regards the poetry of the Sabbatarians, it is, in response to the need which called it into existence, entirely religious in its tenor, being contained in hymn-books which were compiled for a practical purpose, viz., for use in private and public worship on Sabbaths and Festivals. We learn from Kohn what are the contents of the older hymn-book, which has been preserved in a number of codices, written before the turning-point in the development of Sabbatarianism which was marked by Péchi's fall (1621). These codices supplement each other. Among the portions of this older hymn-book, the contents of which have been fully described above (see p. 473), there are a number of didactic poems, among them one in 15 sections, which proceeds from the pen of the founder of the sect, Andreas Eössi, and which contains a polemical exposition of his doctrines. The names of the authors, among whom Péchi must be reckoned, are seldom mentioned. The poems of this older hymn-book mark the first stage in the growth of Sabbatarianism, and in spite of their professed Jewish character (forming as they do a rich poetical anthology suited to the cycle of the Jewish festivals), and in spite also of the influence of the literature of Jewish tradition already perceptible in them, the dogmatic connection of Sabba-

tarianism with Christianity is still manifest from their contents. Complete severance from the soil of Christianity and the infusion of a purely Jewish spirit, are revealed in the Sabbatarian poetry of the second epoch, which is almost entirely possessed by the mighty figure of Péchi. Partly in the prayer-book of Péchi, of which more will be said below, partly in the later hymn-books of the Sabbatarians (of which the oldest known copy dates from the year 1720) are to be found hymns for the various festivals, the greater portion of which (22 in number) consist of poetical translations of parts of the Sephardic Festival book (*Machzor*), while others are free versions of single pieces from that liturgy. Among the translations is to be found a rendering of the hymn יגדל. It may be here mentioned, as a curiosity of literature no less than as showing the contact of creeds, that this hymn, containing as it does a recital of Maimonides' thirteen articles of faith, has been incorporated, with trifling changes, into the hymn-book, which is still in use, of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania. As another product of Sabbatarian poesy, may be mentioned the Translation of the Psalms by Nicholas Fazakas Bogáthi, the first paraphrase of the Psalms in the Hungarian language. That its author possessed a remarkable knowledge of Hebrew is proved by the fact that in his explanation of the Psalms he made use of the three most celebrated Jewish commentaries, those of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and David Kimchi.

Compared with the hymn-book of the first Sabbatarian epoch, the prose of that period which has come to our knowledge, occupies but a humble place. A manuscript has been preserved containing a collection of prose pieces by various authors belonging to 1600-1628. They consist of prayers, partly translated from the Hebrew prayer-book, articles of faith, groups and elucidations of Biblical precepts, polemical writings against Christian dogmas. The prose productions of the second epoch, on the other hand,—or rather, since Simon Péchi is their sole author, the prose writings of the learned and zealous chancellor—contain a surprising wealth of material. The most important of them is the prayer-book of the Sabbatarians, which was in use down to the most recent times, and has therefore been preserved in numerous copies. Kohn proves by convincing arguments, and in consonance with the verbal tradition still prevailing in Bözöd-Ujfalú, that this comprehensive work, occupying five to six hundred closely written pages, was composed by Péchi. It contains a translation, or rather an adaptation of the Hebrew prayer-book (*Siddur*) according to the Sephardic ritual, amplified by numerous passages extracted from the festival prayer-book

(Machzor) of the Sephardic Jews (especially for Passover and the Day of Atonement). Besides this, however, it contains in connection with particular prayers, directions concerning Jewish rites and ceremonies, as well as various religious and moral meditations and admonitions. How Péchi in this reproduction of the prayer-book was continually guided by a regard for its practical object, viz., its use as a prayer-book by his Sabbatarian co-religionists, is shown by the circumstance that in those passages where the praying Israelite speaks of his forefathers, Péchi makes use of turns and paraphrases, which would be intelligible in the mouths of worshippers who belong to Israel by conviction, but not by race. For instance in the blessings of the morning prayers, the words "who crownest Israel with glory," become "who crownest Israel and all faithful believers in thee with glory." Or where in the prayer-book it is said "Thou didst deliver us from Egypt," with Péchi the phrase becomes "Thou didst deliver thy people from Egypt."

Next to the prayer-book, Péchi's most important work is his translation of the Psalms, which has been preserved in a single copy, partly written with his own hand and entirely revised by him. This prose translation of the Psalms, which is distinguished for its pithy language, is accompanied by a commentary, which contains both philological and exegetical elucidations, and also general observations regarding author, occasion, and contents of individual Psalms. In this commentary is included an astounding mass of learning. Except the Vulgate and Sebastian Münster's Commentary on the Psalms, the sources whence Péchi derived the material for his explanations were Jewish — Targum, Talmud, Midrash Shocher-tôb, the Commentaries of Rashi, Ibn Yachya, but especially David Kimchi. A further remarkable fact to be mentioned is that the Commentary contains likewise polemical *excursuses* against Christian dogma. Another codex, 250 leaves in bulk, and likewise written for the most part by Péchi himself, contains a translation of the work *Mille di Aboth*, a commentary to the Ethics of the Fathers (Pirké Aboth), by Joseph Chayûn. This manuscript, like the Commentary on the Psalms, contains here and there specimens of beautiful Hebrew caligraphy, written by his own hand. Péchi had already translated the *Tractate Aboth* itself.

Péchi next devoted himself to making a paraphrase with annotations of the *Great Book of Commandments* (ספר מצוות, by R. Moses, of Coucy, which is extant in one fragmentary Codex; a portion of this paraphrase from the 37th to the 124th prohibition has been preserved. This fragment is to

be found in a volume, the remaining contents of which consist of a transcript, written in the year 1705, of various works of Péchi's. These are: A translation of four sections of the work *Menorath Hamaor*, by Israel Alnaqwa, made from an edition of the book in Elias de Vidas's *Reshith Chochmah*; a translation of the ethical compendium *Orchoth Chayim* (also called *Hanhagah*), of R. Asher b. Jechiel; a translation of single passages from the Yalkut Shimeoni, the Tur, Shulchan Aruch, and the Agadic literature, as well as of the Baraitha of the thirteen rules of R. Ishmael, which forms an introduction to the Sifrâ.

Péchi likewise executed a translation of the Pentateuch, divided according to the weekly portions, and containing explanations at the end of each chapter, in which the commentary of Chiskiyah ben Manoach, entitled *Chazkuni*, is especially quoted. Of this translation a considerable fragment has been preserved, extending from the 5th chapter of the first book to the 12th chapter of the second.

The mere extent of the work of translation achieved by Péchi justifies of itself the verdict of Kohn that its author occupies a prominent place among Hebraists of non-Jewish origin, including those not of his own time. In this matter regard must also be had for the fact that Péchi wrote his works under the most difficult conditions—far from the assistance afforded by the Universities of the West, and without the help of learned Jews; dependent entirely and solely on the knowledge of languages he had acquired during his travels, extending over several years, and upon the energy of a mind filled and impelled by religious zeal. Still further stress must be laid on the circumstance that the language into which he translated—the Hungarian—had never been used before that time for the kind of matter which is contained in his translated works (excepting only that translations of the Bible existed). Indeed, in Jewish quarters, it is only in our own day that Jewish science has begun to be cultivated in the Hungarian language. By these works of his, which appeared three and a-half centuries ago, Péchi not only anticipated the latest literary efforts of the Hungarian Jews, but in faultless form, which reaches the highest literary level of his time, he transplanted products of Jewish literature into Hungarian which even now have not been translated into any other European tongue. The universal history of literature will have to register the fact that in the domain of translations from Jewish literature, Péchi has earned the right of priority for the Hungarian language.

Of still greater significance is the general interest attaching

to the poetry of the Sabbatarians. The religious aspirations of the followers of Judaism have at all times found satisfaction and expression in poetry written in Hebrew—exceptionally, also, in Chaldee. The classical poets of the Spanish-Arabian epoch composed their poems, even those not designed for the liturgy, in Hebrew only—never in Arabic. It was reserved for the humble singers among the Sabbatarians in Transylvania to use for the first time a different language from the Hebrew in Jewish worship; for, though their service was not conceived quite after the model of traditional Judaism, it, nevertheless, from the earliest times, gave expression to the ideas of Judaism, and, later on, fashioned itself more and more according to the Jewish form. Long before a German poem was admitted into the liturgy of the Synagogue in Hamburg, Hungarian hymns, designed for the glorification of the Sabbath and other Jewish festive seasons, were written and sung at Divine service with pious devotion. And, long ere the “Mendelssohn of the Machsor” (Heidenheim) translated the Piyut literature into pure German, and then only into prose, simple Székely peasants and artisans in a remote corner of Transylvania were deriving edification from translations out of that literature, which even now have not lost their value. Just as the last remnant of the Sabbatarians, the indigent Jewish congregation of Bözöd-Ujfallu, deserves the sincere and practical sympathy of every Jew, so the intellectual bequest of Sabbatarianism has a claim on the active interest of all friends and students of the literature of Judaism.

XII.

I hope I may be permitted to conclude this sketch of the history and literature of the Sabbatarians with an observation of a general character. Nine hundred years before the rise of the Hungarians, Eössi and Péchi, a nation racially connected with the Hungarians joined the religion of Israel. Bulan, King of the Chazars, embraced Judaism, and a long succession of Jewish kings ruled his people, at that time a powerful nation. It is well known that a literary interest also attaches to the conversion of the Chazars—the correspondence of the King of the Chazars with Chasdai Ibn Shaprut and the philosophic religious work of Jehudah Halevi form an everlasting memorial of that event. But more significant than this conversion of a heathen ruler in the early part of the Middle Ages seems to me to be the rise and continuance of the Sabbatarian sect in an epoch belonging to the modern

era, and in the midst of a purely Christian population. Proceeding from the initiative and the deep religious sentiments of a few spiritually gifted men, speedily finding a lodging among the wide ranks of nobility, in the civic and peasant classes, and then, after violent oppression, faithfully cherished by the religious sense of simple people, Hungarian Sabbatarianism offers the most brilliant example of the spiritual power which the Jewish religion is capable of exerting over the ranks of people of non-Jewish origin. It is true that Judaism does not lend itself to any kind of propagandism, but we acknowledge the glorious assurance which we have inherited from olden times, and to which we give expression in our daily prayers, that Judaism is destined to be the religion of all humanity. And thus we may be allowed to look back with satisfaction to a popular movement, arising without the employment of force, and without even a resort to measures of persuasion, through which respected followers of Christianity were led to seek in Judaism the satisfaction of their religious strivings, and to say to us, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zechariah viii. 23).

W. BACHER.
